

JAPANESE MAGIC ON THE SCREEN. ONMYŌDŌ AND ONMYŌJI IN THE POPULAR CINEMA

INTRODUCTION: ONMYŌDŌ IN POPULAR CULTURE

The contacts between the inhabitants of the Japanese Islands and China in the 6th century resulted in developing the trade arrangements, as well as exchanging religious and philosophical ideas¹. According to the chronicle of early Japanese history, *Nihon Shoki*², the traveling monks brought Buddhism to Japan around the year 552³. The combination of an indigenous Japanese religion – Shintō and a new philosophical system influenced all spheres of social life, from that time divided into two doctrines, each of them responsible for certain aspects of religious celebrations⁴. However, as Hayashi Makoto observes, it was not before the 10th century, when the fusion of Shintō, Buddhism and Chinese Taoism, also popular on the Japanese ground, brought into life an esoteric practice – *onmyōdō*⁵. The Japanese magic system can be characterized as a compromise between the religious practice, occult rituals, Eastern philosophy based on Chinese yin-yang duality⁶ and Confucianism-related Theory of Five Elements⁷.

¹ Bowring, Richard. *The Religious Traditions of Japan 500-1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005, pp. 15 – 19.

² Anonymous. *Nihongi*. Vol. 2. trans. William G. Aston. London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner. 1896, pp. 65 – 67.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ See: Littleton, Scott C. “Shinto”. *Mądrość Wschodu*. Warszawa: Diogenes. 1992, pp. 144 – 161.

⁵ Makoto, Hayashi. “The Tokugawa Shoguns and Onmyōdō.” *Culture and Cosmos* 10/2006, p. 49.

⁶ Pang, Carolyn. *Spirit Servant: Narratives of Shikigami and Onmyōdō developments*. Singapore: National University of Singapore. 2009 [submitted Master of Arts thesis], pp. 11 – 12.

⁷ See: Taylor, Rodney L., Choy Howard Y. F. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Confucianism: N-Z*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group. 2005, pp. 694 – 695. The Theory of Five Elements (*Wu hsing*) explains the functioning of the cosmos by reducing all known processes to basic, core elements that symbolize the correspondences between things in a metaphysical way.

As Makoto and Matthias Hayek indicate⁸, the research on *onmyōdō* is a relatively new field of study in Japanese academia⁹. That is why the terminology used to describe the phenomena is still being discussed and evaluated. Currently, *onmyōdō* is categorized as “religion”, “traditional art”, “folk-religion” or, using the Western term, “magic”¹⁰. Makoto concludes that considering the differences of *onmyōdō* practices in every epoch, the Japanese scholars also proposed era-specific definitions: “court *onmyōdō*,” “medieval *onmyōdō*,” and “popular *onmyōdō*”¹¹. However, for the purposes of this article, I will focus mostly on the last category, as it embraces popular beliefs, best-known symbols, rituals and characters, which were transferred to the cinema and TV screen. According to the descriptions provided by the researchers, “popular *onmyōdō*” can be perceived as a hybrid of Japanese tradition and mass culture; a final product readily available to the uneducated viewer, who is searching for new forms of entertainment¹².

The traces of Shintō, presented on the screen in the form of narrations concerning *yōkai*¹³, *yūrei*¹⁴ and the pantheon of Gods (*Kami*), are visible almost from the beginnings of the Japanese film¹⁵. However, occult *onmyōdō* appeared on the screen no sooner than in the late 1980s. Although the narrations about the cursed place, possessions by the unknown powers, rituals or widely understood magic can be found in earlier productions¹⁶, the recognizable *onmyōdō* practice, for the first time, appeared on the screen in Akio Jissoji’s film *Teito Monogatari* (*Tokyo: The Last Megalopolis*, 1988)¹⁷. A year later the Toho studio also released its sequel, entitled *Teito Taisen* (*Tokyo: The Last War*)¹⁸, directed by Takashige Ichise. Both films were the adaptations of Hiroshi

⁸ Makoto, Hayashi. Hayek, Matthias. “Onmyōdō in Japanese History.” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40/1. 2013, 2 – 3.

⁹ As the authors observe, the interest in writing the academic theses about *onmyōdō* arose after the publication of a book *Nihon Onmyōdōshi sōsetsu*, written by the researcher Shūichi Murayama in 1981. Between 1991 and 1993 Murayama also published the four-volume collection of articles entitled *Onmyōdō sōsho*, what, according to Makoto, offered a solid ground for further research.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Foster, Michael D., *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, pp. 5 – 12. *Yōkai* (also known as *bakemono* or *kaii genshō*) is a category of Japanese creatures recognized in Shintō myths and legends. However, this term describes only the monsters, magical beings, mystical animals and characters different than Gods (*Kami*) or ghosts (*yūrei*).

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 21. *Yūrei* – vengeful ghosts appearing in Shintō legends and (later) on the screen in such films as *Ugetsu Monogatari* (*Ugetsu*, 1954) by Kenji Mizoguchi.

¹⁵ See: Kiejziewicz, Agnieszka. “Shintoistyczni bogowie na dużym ekranie. Przenikanie sacrum do popkultury na przykładzie kinematografii japońskiej.” *Sacrum w kinie. Dekadę później*. Ed. Sebastian Jakub Konefał, Magdalena Zelent, Krzysztof Kornacki. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2013. 333 – 353.

¹⁶ Among the plethora of productions it is worth mentioning *Yabu no Naka no Kuroneko* (*Black Cat*, 1968) by Kaneto Shindō and *Hansu* (*House*, 1977) by Nobuhiko Ōbayashi.

¹⁷ *Teito Monogatari* (*Tokyo: The Last Megalopolis*, 1988), Akio Jissoji.

¹⁸ *Teito Taisen* (*Tokyo: The Last War*, 1989), Takashige Ichise.

Aramata's novels¹⁹, in which the author presented his reinterpretation of the Japanese 20th century history, seen from the perspective of the paranormal powers ruling the world. In the mentioned films (as well as in the books) the plot revolves around the war between good and evil, represented by the Japanese sorcerers – *onmyōji*, dedicated to the chosen side. The practitioners of Japanese magic were the civil servants, specialized in performing the rituals, divinations and summonings. It was also believed that they were able to contact with the spiritual world and transfer the messages between the dead and the living²⁰. Moreover, the figure of the righteous wielder of the magic power appeared also in one of the early films of Kiyoshi Kurosawa – *Sweet Home* (1989)²¹. However, it can be observed that the real popularity of *onmyōdō* on the screen started ten years later, with the screenings of Yōjirō Takita's pictures. In his two fantasy films, *Onmyōji*²² and *Onmyōji 2*²³, the director tried to present the legends of a "Japanese Merlin", Abe no Seimei, portraying not only his deeds and powers but also paying attention to behavior and motivations. Takita's aim was to create a national superhero, what he accomplished by combining the historic resources with the aesthetics of popular cinema. Since the 1990s *onmyōdō* also has appeared in many Japanese animated TV series (*anime*), dedicated to teenagers and children. Here should be mentioned *Tokyo Babylon*²⁴, *Ghost Hunt*²⁵, *Shaman King*²⁶, comedy *Shōnen Onmyōji*²⁷ and, the most recent production, *Sōsei no Onmyōji (Twin Star Exorcists)*²⁸.

The sudden appearance of the Japanese "traditional magic system" on the screen can be connected to the directors' searching for the new ways of presenting supernatural powers. Consequently, adopting the visually compelling and easily recognizable motifs, which are also deeply embedded in the Japanese culture, allowed them to gain two types of the devoted audience. On the one hand, *onmyōdō* gained recognition between Japanese viewers, who follow the story with the curiosity of learning an exciting, but long forgotten, part of their culture. On the other hand, the films depicting Japanese magic are appreciated by the foreign audience, fascinated with the new aspect of an exotic culture revealed to them in the easily approachable form. The popularity of *onmyōdō* films on the Japanese ground can also be related to the

¹⁹ Aramata, Hiroshi. *Teito Monogatari*. Vol. 1-10. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten. 1985 – 1989.

²⁰ Shin'ichi, Shigeta. "A Portrait of Abe no Seimei." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40/1. 2013, pp. 78 – 81.

²¹ *Sweet Home* (1989), Kiyoshi Kurosawa.

²² *Onmyōji (The Yin Yang Master)*, 2001, Yōjirō Takita.

²³ *Onmyōji 2 (The Yin Yang Master)*, 2003, Yōjirō Takita.

²⁴ *Tokyo Babylon* (1992-1994), Koichi Chigira. In 1993 there was also produced a live-action movie *Tokyo Babylon 1999*, which was directed by George Iida. The picture covered the same storyline, but poor visual effects and low budget prevented it from being highly admired by the audience.

²⁵ *Ghost Hunt* (2006-2007), Rei Mano.

²⁶ *Shaman King* (2003-2005), Hiroyuki Takei.

²⁷ *Shōnen Onmyōji* (2006-2007), Kunihiro Mori.

²⁸ *Sōsei no Onmyōji (Twin Star Exorcists)*, 2016, Tomohisa Taguchi.

archetype of a “Western” wizard, well known by the Japanese audience long before the emergence of the national productions depicting magic²⁹. It is also possible to consider the phenomenon of the Japanese esoteric tradition mixed with the popular culture as a continuation of the *kaijū eiga*³⁰ genre. In this case, an *onmyōji* will play the role of a superhero, whose task is to save the existing order from the outside dangers.

JAPANESE MERLIN AND HIS POWERS

Abe no Seimei, the famous figure on whom the filmmakers base their *onmyōji* characters, according to the historical records, lived between A.D. 921 – 1005. The primary document describing his deeds is the diary of a calligrapher Fujiwara no Yukinari. He pointed out that Seimei performed the *henbai* rituals³¹ in front of the Emperor Ichijō (980 – 1011) because he was the most prominent practitioner of that time. What is more, it was written that Seimei changed the procedure of the ritual without consulting it with other *onmyōji*, even though he was not an officer of *Onmyōryō* (Bureau of Yin and Yang). His act was not only accepted by other practitioners, but also the new procedure was adopted without hesitation³², what shows his high position among the others. Abe no Seimei was also well-known for performing *tsuina* ritual, which purpose was to exorcise demons³³. According to *Konjaku monogatari shū*, the collection of tales from the Heian period (794 – 1185), he was able to see and track demonic entities, what was his great advantage over other *onmyōji* masters³⁴. Furthermore, in other sources, it is mentioned that he was effective in causing the rain, controlling the epidemics and reading the signs of nature³⁵. It should be emphasized that during Seimei’s life *onmyōdō* was already institutionalized; the *onmyōji* masters, under the *ritsuryō* code³⁶, received the salary from the court. Also, their ranks and rules of the promotion were strictly described³⁷. In his analysis, Shin’ichi points out

²⁹ Among the wide number of the Western films covering the topic of magic there should be mentioned popular *Harry Potter* series and *The Lord of the Rings*. Therefore the magic also appeared in the early cinema productions like in Swedish *Häxan* (1922) by Benjamin Christensen or in a number of animations like *Wizards* (1977) by Ralph Bakshi or *The Black Cauldron* (1985) by Richard Rich and Ted Berman.

³⁰ *Kaijū eiga* – Japanese name for the genre of the films in which appear the monsters, often destroying the city and being fought by the superhero or another, “good” monster. The best-known example here is the series of the Gojira (Godzilla) films.

³¹ *Henbai* rituals were mostly performed before moving in into a new house.

³² Shin’ichi, Shigeta. op.cit., p. 78.

³³ Ibidem, p. 80.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 81.

³⁵ Ibidem, pp. 81 – 83. Shin’ichi presents the compiled list of all activities performed by Abe no Seimei, mentioned in the Japanese chronicles, diaries, letters and documents.

³⁶ *Ritsuryō code* is a historical law system existing in pre-modern Japan. The system was based on the Chinese political solutions.

³⁷ Ibidem, pp. 87 – 89.

that, around his sixties, Seimei was appointed *Kurōdo-dokoro onmyōji* – a secretarial *onmyōji* for the emperor³⁸.

It is significant that portraying Abe no Seimei as an elderly man, similar in appearance to the Western stereotypical long-beard wizard, is relatively rare in Japanese cinema. Here should be mentioned Yasumasa Hirai, Seimei's descendant appearing in *Teito Monogatari* and grumpy Yamamura from *Sweet Home*. Those two are similar regarding physical features, therefore, while Hirai serves as an *onmyōji*, possesses all attributes of his profession and performs the complex rituals, Yamamura hides his abilities until it is unavoidable to help the rest of the characters in fighting the evil powers. A different concept of a Seimei-based character can be encountered on the ground of animated TV series. The directors consistently choose the young, more visually attractive, version of the famous practitioner. In *Ghost Hunt*, an *onmyōji* Lin Koujo, who also hides his identity for the first six episodes, is in his thirties. Although his behavior is more similar to Yamamura's, protagonist's eternal silence, self-restraint and extensive knowledge about paranormal activities make him even more mysterious. Among other *onmyōji*, aimed at gaining children's attention, Hao Asakura from *Shaman King* and Rokuro Enmadō from *Sōsei no Onmyōj* should be listed. The mentioned protagonists, together with fancy dressed Subaru Sumeragi appearing in Chigira's *Tokyo Babylon*, are designed in a way to initiate a projection-identification process in young viewer's perception. The animated *onmyōji* characters are in their teens and focus mostly on gaining points and skills in a repeatable plot schemes, what resembles the students' routine at school. Teenage wizards also use easily recognizable attributes and colorful attires, becoming just another superheroes, yet refreshed by the film industry.

The *onmyōji* of two identities can be found in the anime series *Shōnen Onmyōji*. The main protagonist in the storyline is Abe no Masahiro, a (fictional) grandson of Abe no Seimei, who strives to gain powers similar to his ancestor's abilities. The figure of a famous practitioner, depicted as an old official, appears as a contrast to young, vital and inexperienced Masahiro. However, to help his grandson in completing various challenging tasks and battles with evil powers, Abe no Seimei creates a projection of his soul out of the body. Surprisingly, the spiritual manifestation of Seimei's appearance takes the form of his younger, charming self. Laura Miller observes that the extreme makeover of the Japanese wizard in popular culture is connected to the power of girl culture in Japan. Projecting the financial success of their films, the directors try to fulfill the needs of the girl fans, offering them the perfect product they desire³⁹. The process of reimagination Seimei as a *bishōnen*, far different from his presentations on medieval paintings, where he "has a chubby face, thin eyes and pale complexion"⁴⁰, makes him "an exemplary vehicle for validating girl's

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 89.

³⁹ Miller, Laura. "Extreme Makeover for a Heian-Era Wizard." *Mechademia 3: Limits of the Human*. Ed. Frenchy Lunning. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, pp. 30 – 32.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 31.

decades-long interest in the occult”⁴¹. Miller also emphasizes that “Seimei is simultaneously pressed into the service of female subversion when he is so radically reinvented as an aesthetic object of erotic interest”⁴². As an illustration of Miller’s statements can serve the example of Takita’s films: *Onmyoji* (2001) and *Onmyoji 2* (2003). Here the viewer encounters the character of Abe no Seimei significantly different from other men appearing in the picture (apprentices, court notables, warriors) by the terms of his outstanding look, extraordinary abilities, manifested wisdom and understanding of complicated occult matters, as well as an ironic pose. Even though Seimei is a part of the *Onmyōryō* formal structure, he seems to remain above the order, attending only the chosen meetings, having time for entertainment on his premises and not consulting his actions with other practitioners⁴³. Other protagonists relate Seimei’s cunning character, handsome look and great power to his ancestry – it is said that he was born from *kitsune*⁴⁴. However, this statement appearing in Takita’s films has no confirmation in historical writings related to Seimei and it serves only as an explanation to the supernatural power of the wizard.

The character of an *onmyōji* evolves, depending on the publicity he is to be admired by. However, comparing all mentioned heroes to the historical figure of Abe no Seimei, it can be stated that every director’s creation bears some resemblance to its archetype. The character of an *onmyōji* in the recent Japanese films and animations is designed to fulfill the need of an ingenious Japanese wizard and provides the national version of the Western films about magic⁴⁵.

ONMYŌDŌ RITUALS ON THE SCREEN

There are a lot of publications offering the analysis of complexity, meanings and history of *onmyōdō*⁴⁶. Taking this fact into consideration, the description of the practices included in this article will be limited to those appearing on the screen. Furthermore, creating the spectrum of the abilities of a particular *onmyōji*, the directors restrain themselves to the rituals and practices that look spectacular, are easily

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 43.

⁴² Ibidem.

⁴³ There exist the historical records of Seimei’s ironic and cunning behavior that could have inspired the director. See: Shin’ichi, Shigeta. op. cit., p. 80.

⁴⁴ *Kitsune* – a legendary characters, half-women, half-foxes. According to the legends, in their human form they seduced the man and formed a family with him, then had their babies. *Kitsune* were able to live and stay with their husbands until their spouses remained under their enchantments, but when their double identity was revealed, they were forced to leave the family.

⁴⁵ Miller, Laura. op.cit., p. 40. The author observes that the recent “*onmyōji* boom” can be related to the popularity of Harry Potter series, translated into Japanese for the first time in 1999.

⁴⁶ See: Pang, Carolyn. “Uncovering Shikigami. The Search for the Spirit Servant of Onmyōdō.” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40/1. 2013, 99 – 129 or 3. Bialock, David. *Eccentric Spaces, Hidden Histories: Narrative, Ritual, and Royal Authority from The Chronicles of Japan to The Tale of the Heike*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2007.

recognizable and memorable by the audience, as well as simple to explain in one dialogue, without making too many references to the external sources.

The essential power of the Japanese wizard on the screen is the ability to call and command a *shikigami*. This term describes a thaumaturgical emblem of *onmyōdō*⁴⁷, a supernatural spirit servant summoned by an *onmyōji*⁴⁸. As Carolyn Pang emphasizes, there are only glimpse characteristics of *shikigami* provided by the literature, though it can be observed that their abilities and shapes are connected to the natural environment they are bound to⁴⁹. What is more, the spirit servants are the visible manifestations of the *shikisen*, translated as “an augury prepared by using astrological calculations”, accompanied by an instrument, made of augury sticks, called *shikiban*⁵⁰. The ability to summon a spirit servant was perceived as a unique and extremely tough practice only the best *onmyōji* was prepared to perform.

The figure of *shikigami*, perceived as a wizard’s loyal companion, akin to a familiar appearing in Western movies, is enthusiastically used by the filmmakers. The lack of detailed description of the spirit servant’s look or skills in the historical references became beneficial to the mass culture. It resulted in various creative depictions that can be found in films, animations, manga and even video games⁵¹. *Shikigami* can be portrayed as a quickly moving colorful energy that resembles multiplied flashes of light, as in *Ghost Hunt* series, where Lin Koujo summons his five servants to protect unconscious chief of his research group – Naru. Another vision is presented in *Tēito monogatari*, where *shikigami* in animal and monster forms can be encountered. In one of the first scenes of the film, the viewer witnesses the attack of evil spirits that resemble bloodthirsty crows. The servants of a *hoshi onmyōji* (an evil wizard) Katō were sent to the Yasumasa Hirai’s Shintō shrine to manifest the power of an antagonist. Later on, Katō also commands the spirits in the form of goblins and a terracotta, war golem. Monster *shikigami*, called Zenki and Goki, are also summoned by another evil *onmyōji*, Hao Asakura, in *Shaman King* animated TV series. However, more often the filmmakers choose an anthropomorphic spirit and introduce it as a secondary character. In Takita’s *Onmyoji* Abe no Seimei spends time in the companionship of beautiful women, but when his assistant, Hiromasa, interrupts one of the tea parties, turns out that they are just *shikigami* created by the wizard. When the beauties vanish into the thin air, the man finds origami paper shaped as little dolls scattered around. Seimei explains that it is more comfortable to spend time in the presence of *shikigami*, as he can dismiss them any time necessary, because they exist to serve. Here the director not only chose an anthropomorphic *shikigami*, but also presented the technical aspects of summoning them. The paper dolls are another forms of a *shikiban* mentioned before, what makes the presence on the screen easier to be

⁴⁷ Pang, Carolyn. “Uncovering Shikigami...”, p. 99.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 100.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 99.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 100.

explained to the viewer and allows to use visually attractive special effects. Also, Lin Koujo in *Ghost Hunt* practices a similar method of using effigy dolls, but he produces the artifacts out of wood.

The actions taken by an *onmyōji* in Japanese films revolve around two rituals incorporated on the screen in their simplified form. The aim of the first one, *henbai*, is to purify the exact place before entering or moving in and, as a result, to create a boundary between 'inside' and 'outside' areas. The traditional procedure involved scattering the raw rice, dancing and singing to drive off evil⁵². However, the ceremonies presented on the screen evolved to be more attractive to the audience, what makes *henbai* recognizable only by analyzing the context of the particular film. A vivid example of the ritual can be observed in Takita's second film featuring Abe no Seimei – *Onmyōji 2*. In one of the last scenes the *onmyōji* tries to enter the sacred land of the Gods and to accomplish it, he presents a ritual dance of purification, making the boundary between the worlds visible. Instead of rice, he uses golden powder to scatter around and the recited mantra comes from the off-screen, as the director creates his visionary version of *henbai*, combining the traditional depictions with the special effects.

Another ritual connected to the activities of an *onmyōji* on the screen is *tsuina*, described as a purification from the influence of the demons. It can be observed that when *henbai* was related mostly to the places, the practice of *tsuina* also focuses on the particular person possessed by the evil power⁵³. The practice itself appears in every film or animation related to *onmyōdō*, as it became the most recognizable ability of a Japanese wizard. The cinematic *onmyōji*, often perceived by the others as capable of seeing the demons, uses the whole arsenal of methods, which form the whole ritual. Mostly, the practitioner uses effigy dolls, musical instruments, fire and *norito* prayers written on the rectangular pieces of paper, creating almost theatrical performance finished in a spectacular driving out of a demon. Very often a practitioner protects himself drawing the mystical symbol of a five-pointed star, known in the West as a pentagram⁵⁴. Except for the simple forms of *tsuina* ritual in most of the animations, created only to entertain the audience and highlight the greatness of an *onmyōji* as a superior character, there should also be mentioned the rituals performed by Abe no Seimei in Takita's *Onmyōji*. With all his mastery, the wizard expels demons from the body of a deceased infant and brings it to life, as well as saves the immortal priestess possessed by the same power. Finally, he performs a complicated *tsuina* to free the noble family from the curse of a *hoshi onmyōji*.

Onmyōdō rituals on the screen are simplified for the sake of the audience, who has to be able to understand the plot and, in the same time, enjoys the screening. The filmmakers use the traditional sources only as the starting points for their imaginations, freely choosing, merging and altering the parts of the rituals. However,

⁵² Shin'ichi, Shigeta. op.cit., pp. 78 – 83.

⁵³ Ibidem, pp. 79 – 80.

⁵⁴ According to the legends, the pentagram is also Seimei's seal, related to the Five Elements, mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

it should also be said that by incorporating Japanese rituals to their works, not just copying Western depictions of magic on the screen, the directors popularize an important, but relatively unknown part of Japanese culture.

CONCLUSION

The complexity and long history of *onmyōdō* make it a rich source of inspiration for the filmmakers and the creators of popular culture. Unfortunately, as Dani Cavallaro observes: “for both many young Japanese and for most Westerners, *onmyōdō*⁵⁵ is only known as a fruitful source of fictional entertainment”⁵⁶. The directors of the *onmyōdō* films, presented in this article, manifest different approaches to the Japanese magic: it is taken seriously, as in the case of *Teito monogatari* and *Onmyōji*, rooting the practice in a historical background or it is perceived as a pretext to create comical narrations⁵⁷. *Onmyōdō* has been appearing on the screen only for the past thirty years, so the special effects and commercialization had a significant influence on the narrative schemes. It should be mentioned that in Japan magic was never condemned by the authorities or perceived as a threat to the political or religious order. *Onmyōdō*, from its beginnings, was a part of a national, Shintoistic practice, so it was possible to create, recreate and popularize a romantic myth of a great practitioner Abe no Seimei. The Japanese viewers fell in love with a magnetizing force of wizard’s personality, admiring a superhero living outside the rules and fighting evil with his broad knowledge of the rituals⁵⁸. Moreover, in the era of developing technologies and special effects, more *onmyōdō*-related films can be expected, enough to mention that *Sōsei no Onmyōji* is still on in Japan and there are plans to release a PlayStation game based on the series⁵⁹.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aramata, Hiroshi. *Teito Monogatari*. Vol. 1-10. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1985 – 1989.
- Bialock, David. *Eccentric Spaces, Hidden Histories: Narrative, Ritual, and Royal Authority from The Chronicles of Japan to The Tale of the Heike*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2007.
- Bowring, Richard. *The Religious Traditions of Japan 500-1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005.
- Cavallaro, Dani. *Magic as Metaphor in Anime: A Critical Study*. Jefferson: McFarland. 2009.

⁵⁵ The author uses different phonography than used in this paper, however equally correct.

⁵⁶ Cavallaro, Dani. *Magic as Metaphor in Anime: A Critical Study*. Jefferson: McFarland. 2009, p. 101.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 102.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, p. 101.

⁵⁹ The official website of the game (in Japanese): <http://sousei.bn-ent.net/>. n.d. Web. 2.11.2016.

- Foster, Michael D., *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.
- Goto-Jones, Chris. "Japanese magic and magic in Japan." *Conjuring Asia. Magic, Orientalism and the Making of the Modern World*. Ed. Idem. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 265 – 303.
- Kiejziewicz, Agnieszka. "Shintoistyczni bogowie na dużym ekranie. Przenikanie sacrum do popkultury na przykładzie kinematografii japońskiej." *Sacrum w kinie. Dekadę później*. Ed. Sebastian Jakub Konefał, Magdalena Zelent, Krzysztof Kornacki. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2013. 333 – 353.
- Littleton, Scott C. "Shinto". *Mądrość Wschodu*. Warszawa: Diogenes, 1992, pp. 144 – 161.
- Makoto, Hayashi. "The Tokugawa Shoguns and Onmyōdō." *Culture and Cosmos* 10/2006, pp. 49 – 62.
- Makoto, Hayashi. Hayek, Matthias. "Onmyōdō in Japanese History." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40/1. 2013, 1 – 18.
- Miller, Laura. "Extreme Makeover for a Heian-Era Wizard." *Mechademia 3: Limits of the Human*. Ed. Frenchy Lunning. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. 30 – 45.
- Anonymous. *Nihongi*. trans. William G. Aston. London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner, 1896.
- Pang, Carolyn. *Spirit Servant: Narratives of Shikigami and Onmyōdō developments*. Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2009 [submitted Master of Arts thesis].
- Pang, Carolyn. "Uncovering Shikigami. The Search for the Spirit Servant of Onmyōdō." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40/1. 2013, 99 – 129.
- Shin'ichi, Shigeta. "A Portrait of Abe no Seimei." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40/1. 2013, pp. 77 – 97.
- Taylor, Rodney L., Choy Howard Y. F. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Confucianism: N-Z*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2005.
- Yanagihara, Toshiaki. "Onmyōdō in the Muromachi period." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40/1. 2013, pp. 131 – 151.

FILMOGRAPHY

- Ghost hunt* (2006-2007), Rei Mano.
- Onmyoji (The Yin Yang Master)*, 2001), Yōjirō Takita.
- Onmyoji 2* (2003), Yōjirō Takita.
- Shaman King* (2003-2005), Hiroyuki Takei.
- Shōnen Onmyōji* (2006-2007), Kunihiro Mori.
- Sōsei no Onmyōji (Twin Star Exorcists)*, 2016), Tomohisa Taguchi.
- Sweet Home* (1989) Kiyoshi Kurosawa
- Teito Monogatari (Tokyo: The Last Megalopolis)*, 1988), Akio Jissoji.
- Teito Taisen (Tokyo: The Last War)*, 1989), Takashige Ichise.
- Tokyo Babylon* (1992-1994), Koichi Chigira.
- Tokyo Babylon 1999* (1993), George Iida.

SUMMARY

JAPANESE MAGIC ON THE SCREEN. ONMYŌDŌ AND ONMYŌJI
IN THE POPULAR CINEMA

Onmyōdō, an indigenous Japanese magic system, which developed from the 10th century, also appeared in the Japanese popular cinema. Responding to the needs of the audience, the filmmakers combined the historic resources with the aesthetics of the popular culture, creating a successful product and, at the same time, popularized a romantic myth of a great *onmyōji* – Abe no Seimei. The aim of this article is to present the development of the Japanese magic on the screen, as well as to show the differences and similarities between presentations of the protagonists and rituals in the chosen pictures. In the beginning, the author offers a brief summary of the history of *onmyōdō* on the Japanese ground and the further development of the phenomenon on the screen. In the next parts of the presented paper the author analyses the images of Abe no Seimei in popular cinema and compares the filmmakers' visions to the descriptions of the wizard provided by the historians. The last part of the article revolves around the rituals presented on the screen, inspired by the processes depicted in the chronicles, as well as in the legends.